
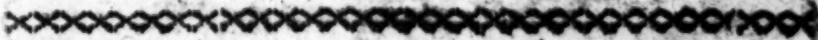


*Public Confession of CHRIST illustrated,
and the Obligations to it Rated.*



A
S E R M O N, &c.

By JAMES RAMSAY Minister of the Gospel
in GLASGOW.



.....

The Collection of CHRIST illuminated
and the obligation to it dated.

.....



S E R M O N

JAMES HAMILTON Minister of the Gospel
in Glasgow.

.....

*Public Confession of CHRIST, illustrated,
and the Obligations to it stated.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached at NEWTON of MEARN'S 5th of
September, 1780. being a Day of SOLEMN
FASTING and COVENANTING.

By JAMES RAMSAY, Minister of the Gospel
in GLASGOW.

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Public Confession of Christ
and the Obligations to it



THIS SERMON was only meant to serve the occasion for which it was composed:—Nor would the importunate request of many of the hearers in different Congregations, Have drawn it from me, had I not been afraid of resisting the call of Providence to any thing in my power, thought conducive to the Church's edification. That its Publication may not be without some fruit to the honour of the Lord of the harvest, is the prayer of

JAMES RAMSAY.

CLACKN

Printed by John Baskett

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W. Baskett

ROMANS x. 10.

*For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness,
and with the mouth confession is made unto salva-
tion.*

THIS verse is intended to illustrate the doctrine taught in the preceding one. In the *first* part of it, the apostle shews how men attain *righteousness* to justification;—not by works of any kind which they themselves have done, or can do, but by *believing*,—in the exercise of faith on the righteousness of the divine Redeemer, who fulfilled the whole law in the nature, and in the name of his people: for then what he did and suffered is imputed to them, as if in their own persons they had accomplished all; and so, boasting being cut off from the creature, free grace has the whole glory.

With the heart man thus believeth unto righteousness. Faith is not an airy notion, coming no man knows how, proceeding upon grounds no man knows what; nor is it a mere assent of the speculative understanding to any particular doctrine of scripture, or the several doctrines of it taken in connexion. The *heart* is no less engaged in the exercise of faith than the mind, though in a different way. As the whole soul is subdued by the power of Jehovah's arm, so in believing the whole soul goes forth after the person of Christ, his righteousness and salvation. While the understanding gives full credit to the gospel report, the heart consents to be saved in the way of
grace

grace through Christ, and so accepts of the gift of righteousness, and of a free salvation by it, as exhibited and offered in that report. A person so believes the divine declaration in the word of truth, as heartily to close with all that is there set forth and made over to him as his own, to be held and enjoyed in the way of receiving it ; particularly and immediately appropriating the Lord's righteousness, as an everlasting security against the stroke of vindictive justice. Thus it is placed to his account, and becomes his property, of which nothing can deprive him.

In the *other* part of the verse, which we propose more particularly to consider, an important duty, flowing from faith, is mentioned and recommended to our practice.—*And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* The *confession* here is an outward expression of our faith, notifying how our hearts stand affected to precious Christ in his person and Mediation, to his truths and ways, his work and interest in the world. It is a declaration what account we make of him as the sent and sealed of the Father, according to the revelation made of him in the word ;—intimating, that, having through grace believed on him with the heart, and devoted ourselves to his glory, we are resolved, in the power of the same grace, to walk in his ways, and, at every expence, cleave to his interest and cause. This confession is made *unto salvation* ;—not as if the *confession* itself, or any circumstance attending it, has in it any *merit*, less or more, for salvation. The man who believes with the heart, and so makes a confession in the due order, is, in that very believing, brought into a state of salvation. Though his faith does no more confer a *right* to salvation than his works, yet in the exercise of that grace he is actually possessed of a right through CHRIST, as the Lord his righteousness, to all the felicity and glory contained in God's covenant ; a right that can never be invalidated, or so much as questioned on any proper grounds. But
still

still confession is a *mean* of God's appointment for building us up in Christ, and arriving at that full salvation which lies in the promise; as it is one leading way in which divine faith, operating with proper force in the heart, and duely regulated, and so our interest in Christ and his salvation is,—*evidenced* to ourselves and others. For faith of salvation, in suitable exercise, naturally leads to confession as an important and necessary piece of duty, in attention to which, we are to expect the consummation of all our hopes. After this short view of the words, what we design further, through divine aid, is to *illustrate* that *confession* of Christ, which is required of Christians in consequence of their believing with the heart; and then *state* some of the *obligations* to such a *confession*, with a short *improvement*. Now the *confession* here recommended to us, is an *open, joint, full, pointed, uniform and stedfast* confession; which may, and sometimes should be made, by *solemn oath*, upon *full conviction*, and ought always to be *justified* by a *suitable conversation*. A confession that is

FIRST, *Public and open*; for it is to be made with the *mouth*, that all may hear it. What we have learned of Christ, is to be published as it were upon the house top, and with sound of trumpet, in our confession. It is very properly, no doubt, made to God in secret. A believing heart will be often telling a gracious Father its thoughts about him, about the Son of his love, the person's only Saviour and hope, about the mystery of grace in him, and the deep obligations he is under to obey his voice. It considers a call to God's service as a high privilege, and cannot refrain from testifying at his throne, with the utmost satisfaction and warmth, as David, "Oh Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant." But this is not all. It will present a man to the world as a *confessing* member of Christ, that others may be won to so perfect and dear a Redeemer.

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The Christian has every reason to be ashamed of himself, whatever the spirit of holiness has accomplished in him ; but no cause to blush on his Lord's account ; and therefore boldly stands forth on his side, in the face of the greatest danger and hardship. Could he keep his faith and hope to himself without sin, he would not chuse it. This would go far to save his credit with the men of the world indeed, nor will he court observation for its own sake ; but he wishes the praises of Christ to be made glorious ;—thinking it his honour, rather than any abasement, that ever he was called to such fellowship. Night disciples, like *Nicodemus*, consult their paltry interests more than Christ's glory. Though they be accepted as to their *state*, as *Joseph* of *Arimathea* was, their *conduct* is very sinful, and as such condemned by the Lord. It is left as a heavy censure upon some in the days of Christ's flesh, that they “ believed on him,” or pretended to do so ; “ but because of the Pharisees “ they did not confess him, lest they should be put * put out of the synagogue. For they loved the “ praise of men more than the praise of God *.” A believer, acting in character, willingly goes forth without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach. The devil's servants openly avow their master and his work ; —and should he speak of Christ with a whispering voice in a corner, as if afraid his relation and subjection to him should, by any means, be discovered ?

The Lamb's followers are represented as standing on mount *Sion*, so conspicuous that all might see them, having his Father's name, in the most legible characters, written on their foreheads †. None could look them in the face, without easily observing to whom they belonged. The three *Hebrew* worthies might have enjoyed, without suspicion, the favour of their prince, had they concealed their faith, and done homage to him as the other sycophants of his court : but they would have it known in the most positive,

* John x ii. 42, 43.

† Rev. xiv. 1.

positive, determinate and public manner, that they would not serve his gods, nor worship the image which he had set up *. With what courage did *Peter* confess his Master to the *Jewish* council, though, not long before, he had trembled at the remark of a silly maid, and shockingly abjured him? "Be it known unto you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole †." And when he and his brethren were charged, under the severest penalties, to fall from that open confession, they would not much as take it into consideration ‡.—They could not but approve of the spirit of *David*, and resolve at all hazards to express it;—"I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings," whose favour is as a cloud of the latter rain, but whose wrath is as messengers of death; and yet says he, "I will not be ashamed §."—Such is the confession which Christ requires, not of some few only, but of all his friends. He hates the dastardly spirit that skulks behind any worldly pretexts whatever. His words present at once noble encouragement, and a very awful certification, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven ||." And, not to confess him, upon all proper occasions, in the several ways, he has appointed, is upon the matter the same as denying him. No wonder he is ashamed of such cold-hearted, and cowardly pretenders.

SECONDLY, *Joint*. To confess Christ is certainly incumbent on individuals as such, and by themselves severally; nor is there one of us so little connected with the world, as not to be furnished in occasions when this is highly necessary, and may be a con-
 sider-

* Dan. iii. 13.

§ Psal. cxix. 46.

† Acts iv. 10.

‡ v. 19, 20.

Matth. x. 32, 33.

considerable trial of our faith and fortitude; especially among those, who are enemies to every distinguishing confession of Christ, or filled with uncommon indignation and rancour against that confession, which we find ourselves obliged to make. But besides this; the Lord looks for a confession from us *in conjunction* with our brethren. Hence is the call given to the church general, which must extend to every member in connexion, "Confess thy God, O Sion †." The confession is to be made by her in her united collective capacity, and by her members in their *social, connected* state, as parts of the same visible professing society. Such was the confession of the primitive Christians. "They that gladly received the word were baptized, and were added to the church," in her confessing character, "and continued in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayer †." Such also is the confession of those with the Lamb on mount Sion before referred to. They do not stand quite detached, as owning no connexion with, or relation to each other, but as *one company*, with the Lamb at their head, jointly avowing him and his despised, persecuted interests. Such is the confession meant in our text, as the word itself implies. In this confession a standard is displayed for the king of Sion, and church-members take their place by it, as soldiers set in ranks, appearing for the person and authority of their prince.

Union and consent gives a peculiar dignity and force to our confession of Christ. So far as it extends, it shews we are one in the truth; and there is nothing of the kind that reflects more honour on Christ, and commands greater respect to the gospel and its friends, than to see them firmly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, forces veneration in the breasts of its most determined adversaries.

• Psalm cxlix. 1.

† Acts ii. 41, 42.

versaries. Thus the church appears fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. Hence it makes a leading petition in our Lord's prayer, "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me *." It gives *weight* as well as *dignity* to what is declared, as when many witnesses concur in one testimony. If any one of them be a man of probity, we are bound to believe his declaration, unless there be the strongest reasons to the contrary; but when numbers speak the same thing, the evidence is irresistible; unless we have absolutely fallen under the power of the most obstinate incredulity. To which we may add, that by this means Christians strengthen one another's hands. Friends are distinguished from enemies, and they see whom they can trust. Finding they are not left alone in so good a work, they are encouraged to greater resolution, firmness and honesty; particularly, it goes a great way to keep them in countenance, when multitudes stand pointing to them with the finger, as if by their confession, they were made a spectacle to angels and men, or reduced to another species of beings, than those who appear in the same human form. Thus too they make themselves sure of sympathy, and all possible support from their brethren, under present or future trials, in abiding by the duties, and following out the ends of their common confession. When the builders are considerable in number, tho' few in comparison of those that are at ease in Sion, or are set for her affliction,—the work goes on with greater alacrity and dispatch, while opposition is more discouraged. If in any case, eminently in this, as iron sharpeneth iron, so does the face of a man his friend. Two are better than one; for if the one fall, the other will raise him up; and a threefold cord is not easily broken.

THIRDLY

* John xvii. 21.

THIRDLY, *Extensive and full.* Our confession has its proper bounds. It must not, upon any consideration, reach to the doctrines and commandments of men : for in so far we become the servants of men and cast off the authority of Jesus Christ. It is highly dishonouring to our Lord in all respects ; particularly as it gives a false account of him to the world. Whoever insist upon it, therefore, and whatever temptations be presented, we may not in these things touch, taste or handle. To the law, and to the testimony. The word of God in this, as in other things, is our *only* rule. Our confession must not add to that word ; but should be so extensive as to shun nothing it lays before us. Nay, we are to be careful in the use of all appointed means, that our confession and the oracles of God be of the same extent ;—the one being an exact declaration of what is testified in the other. The injunction laid on the apostles, as to their ministry, will apply to our confession ; for we are to believe what they, as Christ's ambassadors, have declared, and what is believed, is also to be confessed.—Now it was our Lord's charge to them, to teach the church to observe all things whatsoever he said unto them †. We are not to make our own fancies, or those of other men, be their station ever so high, their learning ever so great, or their piety ever so eminent, the matter of our faith and confession : but whatever, under the conduct of the divine Spirit, we can gather from scripture, as bearing the stamp of divine authority, must have place according to its importance and connexion. Whatever is the faith of the gospel, and as such has been delivered to the saints for their edification, and as a sacred trust, that we are honestly to appear for, though in the field of contention even unto blood. If we exclude any part of it, whether immediately relating to doctrine, worship, or church-order, we mangle the faith,

† Matth. xxviii. 20.

faith, and detract from our Lord's glorious character exhibited in the word.

There are many articles of revelation, that some professed Christians call *false* or *doubtful*; but we must not allow their opinion to frame our creed. The voice of the Spirit speaking to the churches, and not their humours or prejudices, we are to attend to. One hint from him, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, is certainly intitled to greater regard than all the volumes of their cunning craftiness.—There are articles, which some seem to take a pleasure in hissing out of the churches, under the notion of their being *small* and *indifferent*, *punctilios*, or circumstantial, and so not worth taking into our confession; but to represent any point of revelation, be it what it will, in this light,—we can hold for no other than open blasphemy. For, tho' it be true, there are some points small in comparison of others, yet since they come from God, they must be precious in themselves, of vast concern to the church's edification, and worth contending for unto bonds and death. They hold an important place in the system of divine truth or ordinances, and such as no other thing can fill. Besides, by the relation in which they stand to other things, they acquire additional excellency and importance. Every stone in a building is not a foundation stone, but it is related to it, and every other in the building. In pulling it out, you, in so far, spoil the beauty of the whole edifice and weaken it. To all such loose and blasphemous suggestions, so common and fashionable in our times, which appear to multitudes perfectly reasonable, and the effect of extraordinary illumination, in respect of our faith and confession we have only to reply with Moses, in another case, “There shall not an hoof be left behind, for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God.*” Such a confession places us with those on mount Sion, who had not

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* Exod. x. 26.

some few letters only of the Father's name, but the whole of it, so far as they had been instructed, on their foreheads. Though it may be granted, that every letter of his name is not a capital one, to speak so, and that all points in our confession are not of the same consequence; yet every letter belongs to the unity and glory of his name, and to the perfection of our testimony.

FOURTHLY, *Pointed.* The circumstances of the church, and accordingly of her members, are continually changing. In no two generations, perhaps, is her condition precisely the same, either in relation to her own internal concerns, or the outward aspect of providence toward her. Though fair as the moon, in these respects she is nearly as inconstant; and our confession should agree as much as possible to her circumstances: the more does she appear like herself, and the better does she serve the purposes of her erection, both as to the edification of her own members and the information of the world, when it is so. Her public confession, it is true, never should be altered but upon mature deliberation, and a careful comparison of word and providence; but it is no less certain, that these should be studied with the most fixed attention, and her confession suited to the intimations of the Lord's mind by them.

No period of time has ever yet passed over the church, and perhaps, never will, in which some particular truths or ordinances have not been eminently the *present truth*, and the *word of Christ's patience*; to which her attention is more particularly and immediately to be turned, and in abiding by which, her faithfulness and zeal will be signally tried. To discover this we have a very just and easy rule, - whatever part of the church's faith or practice the malignity of men and devils is especially pointed against, labouring by all methods in their power to subvert, corrupt or deprive her of, *that is the present truth*, and the *word of the Redeemer's patience*; of consequence

quence the edge of our confession is in a particular, and in the most *pointed* manner, to be laid that way; as soldiers, in a camp or garrison, find it at once their duty and interest, to fly to that quarter where the briskest attack is made, and there exert their main force. This *must* be the case, if we mean to defend the truth with success, or indeed if we wish to make any approved and effectual opposition at all to the adversary.

Such a *pointed* confession has been a great object to the faithful in all generations, both under the old and new dispensation. We shall confine ourselves to a few examples under the latter. Immediately on the erection of the new Testament church, the great points were the *Divinity*, the *Messiahship* and *resurrection* of our Lord; and you all know how *pointed* and express the church was in her confession of these truths. Soon after, her freedom from the law of ceremonial ordinances became an additional article, violently opposed by the adversary; and toward this was her confession turned †.—Not many years after this, again, she was pestered with a set of *filthy dreamers*, called *Gnostics*, in endless divisions and sub-divisions; and her testimony was framed accordingly ‡. At the reformation from *Papery*, the great truth, distinguished from a multitude of others, was a sinner's justification before God, through faith in Christ's righteousness alone; and this of course made a capital figure in the confessions of all the Protestant churches §. To run through all the contendings of the faithful since that time, in our own land, according to their circumstances, for the kingly prerogatives of Christ, the purity of gospel-worship, and the scriptural constitution and order of the church, would be tedious in this place. We must, however, recommend them to your perusal and inquiry, as preserved in the authentic histories

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† Acts xv.

§ Rev. xv. 2.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. Jude. Rev. ii. iii.

of these times, and containing a very clear illustration of the observation before us. Such are the evil days, into which we have fallen, that in some respects, it is hard to say, what part of the Christian system has been most audaciously attacked: but this shews how particular and explicit our confession should be. Christians are not to think strange that a confession of this kind should expose them to the fiercest resentment of the world; for the testimony of the witnesses ever has, and in the nature of things ever must, prove the most exquisite torment to the men who dwell on the earth, when it is *laid close* against their favourite opinions or practices; and this must stimulate them to run with fury all the length of their chain in order to resent the indignity, and set themselves at ease; yet we are not to be discouraged, since our Lord has enough to bear all the expence of the warfare.

FIFTHLY, *Consistent and uniform.* Every part of our confession must be of the same kind, and consistent with another part. Truth is ever in harmony with itself. Tho' comprehending a great number of articles, revealed truth is, and always must be so. There may be, and often is great difficulty for us to perceive the harmony and agreement of one thing with another; such is the weakness of our understandings when most enlarged, and its darkness when most enlightened; but the consistence is perfect: else such a revelation could not be from God who is *one*, and never contradicts himself. Such ought our *confession* to be, and such, if indeed scriptural, it must be. Without *uniformity*, let men pretend what they please, and urge their pretensions with ever so much zeal, there is some notable flaw in their confession. Wood, hay or stubble are built upon the foundation. Something of a very different nature from the doctrine of Christ enters their creed; else it would be all of a piece,—every article reflecting light and beauty upon another. Nor without this

this can we rationally expect our confession will gain credit and esteem, except among those under the power of the same deception. What hold can we lay upon the testimony of witnesses, who do not agree? and how shall men trust that confession which is at war with itself? Whatever prevails with us in making it, we attempt to palm absurdities on the Most High, and destroy our own characters, as witnesses of his name. In this even *Peter*, though a pillar, failed exceedingly on a certain occasion, so far as his principles could be gathered from his conduct. Before the *Jews* came to *Antioch*, he maintained the closest and most familiar intercourse with the *Gentiles*, and so confessed that the wall of partition was broken down; but after their arrival, he separated himself, and so professed, that this wall was still standing in all its extent and height: therefore *Paul* withstood him to the face, and very justly reprov'd him. He was much to be blamed for not walking uprightly, and with uniformity declaring the truth of the gospel. So, many teachers in *Galatia* and other quarters betrayed themselves, while they held the obligation of the ceremonial law even upon the *Gentiles*, and yet confessed, that Christ the substance of all these shadows was come in the flesh, and by one offering had made an end of sin.

To apply this to our own times. We cannot confess that Christ is the alone king and head of his church, and yet confess that the supreme magistrate has right to censure her ministers as he pleases, to dissolve her assemblies, or at his own hand to appoint her religious fasts;—that her privileges are sacred, and the example of the apostolic times binding, and yet plead, that a *Patron* by himself, or with the concurrence of a few *heritors* and *elders*, or any other set of men of a like description, have power to nominate and establish her public teachers, in direct opposition to, and in contempt of her firmest remonstrances;—that her judicatories can make no laws to bind the consciences of her ministers and members, and yet contend,

that

that implicit obedience must be yielded to all their decisions, though not only destitute of all foundation in the word of God, but contrary to it, and subversive of her best interests. These things, however, have long obtained in this *national church*. We cannot confess, that it is our duty to separate from such a church on account of these and the like evils, obstinately persisted in, and yet confess, that it is lawful to swear a *Burges's oath*, bearing that we are resolved to abide by the true religion presently professed, and by law established in this country, amounting to an oath of full and lasting communion with the same church;—or that covenanting is a duty of moral obligation, and yet plead, that it is not to be attempted as a mean of reformation in our times,—times of the greatest corruption and backsliding, agreeably to the practice of the church in such times;—because, in so far, our confession destroys itself. Yet these things are held by our brethren on the other side of the *Secession*. We cannot confess, that the ordinances of worship in the last times are simple and spiritual, and the order of God's house is *Presbyterial only*; and yet confess, that *Prelatists* and *Independents*, who contend for a very different worship or church order, abide in the stated observance of it, revile and impugn what we are persuaded has alone the sanction of divine authority, must necessarily be admitted to all the intimacies of church-fellowship; or that we are to love all those who, in the judgment of charity, appear to be saints, so as to admit them to all the privileges of our holy communion; and yet plead, that we are at liberty to discharge in the most public and frontless manner, all the filth of our hearts upon their reputation, or declare they have no interest in the Redeemer's propitiatory sacrifice and death, who presume to differ from us, and oppose our follies; because thus, too, the credibility of our confession is annihilated.—These things, however, are confessed by the *Relief*.—We cannot confess, with the scriptures, that be-
cause

cause the powers that be, are of God, we are bound to give obedience in things lawful, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake ; and that prayers are to be made for *all men*, particularly for kings and all that are in authority ; or with the *Westminster confession*, that “ infidelity and difference in religion doth not make void the magistrates just and legal authority, nor free the people from due obedience to him ; ” and yet profess, we owe no subjection to the *present* civil powers, and ought to cast them out of our prayers ; because here, likewise, our confession would contradict itself. It would be easy to multiply instances, and apply them particularly ; but these may suffice as a specimen of the inconsistency to be found in many confessions, such as, by all means, we are to avoid. We are far from placing the confessions made by these parties on the same ground in other things ; and we are as far from thinking that few of those who make them have believed with the heart. Alas ! how liable are the best men to prejudice and mistake ! but we may be permitted to affirm, that it is something else than faith, that can espouse and confess such inconsistencies and contradictions.

SIXTHLY, *Stedfast*. We are apt to form a poor opinion of a man and his declaration, who says one thing to-day, another thing an hour after, or to-morrow ; especially in matters of importance. We hold such a person unfit for society, and utterly unworthy of it. He will always meet with his own proper reward in this respect, that none of his acquaintances will regard his testimony, even when he declares the truth. And what sort of a figure must that confession make, which, being regulated by a man's fancy or his present humour, by his attachments or connections, by his credit, convenience or what he takes to be his interest, is scarce two days the same ? Now he is quite positive, that this or the other thing is a part of Christ's name, which, therefore, he is bound to confess : then he is no less cer-
tain.

tain, that these things make *no* part of his name, and, therefore, he is obliged to renounce them, and confess the contrary. This man is like a reed shaken of the wind. Does he not resemble children, tossed to and fro, and driven about with every wind of doctrine?—or at least he is ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. It is hard to say where he will settle, if ever he find rest. Much better we make no confession at all, than such a one; for we could not take a more effectual way to convince all with whom we are conversant, that we make sport with every thing awful and important: nay, that all religion is a fancy, and the lively oracles of God a fable. Be they who they will, men will find it, in every respect, a snare to devour that which is holy, and after lawful oaths to make enquiry †.

Confessions of this kind Christ will not own. He strictly enjoins us to *hold* the profession of our faith, not as to the substance only, but all the articles and concerns of it; not in a state of uncertainty, with a mind prepared to receive every novel opinion that becomes the fashion of the day, and so ready to desert the good old way at the call of every fluttering upstart;—but to *hold it fast* without wavering ‡, allowing no inclination of mind to the right hand or to the left. The direction to the church of *Thyatira* is as proper for us as for her, and comes with the same authority.—“ I will put upon you none other “burden, but that which ye have already: hold fast,”—intimating, as our faith and the confession of it is precious and important, all sorts of opposition, requiring the firmest exertion, will be made to us.—How long? till we be offended with some of our brethren, or lay ourselves open to discipline; till we be set in different circumstances by providence, or till another humour strikes us? till some curious
tenet

† Prov. xx. 25.

‡ Heb. x. 23.

tenet be forged by the superfluity of naughtiness, or till we see it convenient from some selfish worldly consideration to change? No; but "till I come*." We are to keep our post, in all seasons, armed against every enemy, in the midst of all temptations, till our Lord dismiss us from this military service, and call us home. This is highly acceptable to him, "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, not even in these days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, and though placed where Satan's seat is †." And to another church,—"Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name ‡." Neither the smiles nor the frowns, not all the terrors nor favours of the Babylonian monarch could prevail with the three noble youths, above referred to, in the least to flinch from their confession; nor had the threatenings and ill usage of the Jewish council the least weight with the apostles. Herein they have left us an example that we should follow their steps; for as Christ in his person is ever the same, so in his truths and ways; nor is he less faithful who hath promised now, than in any former generation. If we have mingled any interest with his in our confession, have avowed any thing the scripture disowns, this is our sin; and to persist in it, adds a high degree of criminality to our offence. But if we have said no other things than the prophets and apostles have done, it is at our peril, if we take our hand from the plough, and look back.

SEVENTHLY, Confession may, and sometimes ought to be made with the solemnity of an oath. Sometimes we say; for we do not plead for it as necessary at all times, and in all circumstances of the church; but when the conspiracy runs high against God and his anointed: when it is a day of debate, division & and

* Rev. ii. 24, 25.

† Chap. ii. 13.

‡ Chap. xiv. 12.

§ After resolving to publish this discourse, I thought of shifting at some considerable length, on the lessons of covenants

and backsliding ; when reformation is attempted in the midst of great difficulties ; or when temptations to

venanting ; but on further consideration, it does not appear expedient at present. On some future occasion this may be attempted with more propriety. I shall only, at this time, mention a few things, which make me inclined to think a time of division among professed Christians a very proper season for that exercise.

First ; The *truth* is not so easily discovered in such a time. Such is our blindness, such are our prejudices and temptations, that it is hard for many to attain the knowledge and profession of the truth in its purity at any time, in the midst of the best opportunities ; much more in a great diversity of opinions, when the most erroneous and absurd tenets are coloured over by all ways of sophistry and misrepresentation. The very heat and contradiction of parties are ready to raise a cloud upon it, especially to weaker Christians, and those who have comparatively few advantages for their information. At such a time, therefore, the church is obliged to be as full and particular, as explicit and clear in her *confession* as possible, that she may communicate all her light, with the most solemn assurances of her sincerity.

Secondly ; The *truth* is then in the greatest danger of suffering. Tho' divisions were multiplied without end, truth can only be found on one side, as to the points in which the several parties differ. It is impossible that *all* can be right, or indeed *any two* of them in these things. In so far then as those in mistake support and defend their own corrupt opinions, and set themselves against the opposite points, do they make war upon the truth. By what methods, alas ! we have daily evidence. Is there a mean of God's appointment for the defence and preservation of the Redeemer's interests in the power of the faithful, that should be wanting in such perilous days ? Should not the banner, in the most full and open manner, be then displayed, if we would not have the truth intirely subverted and wrested from us ? *Confession by oath* is an ordinance of God excellently calculated for managing this necessary and honourable warfare with success. In what season, therefore, can it be more properly employed ? or how are these valiant for the truth, who own it a duty clear from the word of God, and yet decline it in such a season ?

Thirdly ; There will naturally be less *mutual confidence* in a day of division. In a divided distracted state of a nation, much more when matters are come the length of open civil war, no man knows whom he can trust, Every one is ready

to apostacy are more than ordinary strong ;—in these and the like seasons, we *may*, and *ought* to confess Christ by solemn oath. If we are to “*perform* TO

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ready to be filled with suspicion of his neighbour, even under appearances of friendship. So, in a time when divisions run high in the church, even when church members walk in the same distinct communion, and, by their doing so, appear to be agreed in all the concerns of their profession, are they open to suspicion and jealousy one of another ; especially when they consider their respective temptations to apostacy, and observe some falling off on this side and on that, perhaps on the very slightest occasion. At the same time *mutual confidence* in the church is an object of the last importance. The suitable practice of many duties of church fellowship very much depends on it : nor can any vigorous exertion either among church members themselves, or in opposition to the common enemy be made without it. Every thing, therefore, should be done to banish jealousy and distrust, and so to confirm and promote confidence in such circumstances. *Confession by oath* is a capital mean of this kind ; and therefore is not only proper, but in a *special* manner called for in a time of division.

Fourthly ; The arts of *seduction* are generally then most common and forcible. Tho’ it must be confessed with shame to the friends of truth, there is nothing more certain in fact, than that the patrons of absurdity and error, are usually most zealous. The power of their party, and the propagation of their follies ly near their heart. This excites all the guile of the serpent, with which they are often amply furnished, to inveigle silly souls. It works in all shapes conducive to their dark purposes ; so that no man should think himself sufficiently on his guard against their subtilty. All have treacherous hearts, ready to embrace temptations to turn from their stedfastness and yield themselves a prey to the deceiver. Should we then slight any mean of security and establishment in so trying a time ? Will this consist with a holy fear of ourselves, or a due regard to the wisdom and grace of God in providing for our preservation ? *Covenanting* has many things in it remarkably suited for fortifying us against snares, and therefore, should on no account be neglected in such a time. To which we may add

Fifthly ; *Division* in the very nature of things, multiplies and increases *obstructions* in the way of reformation. The greater the differences of opinion among professed Christians, and the greater the keenness of spirit with which

controversy.

"THE LORD our baths *," that supposes our obligation to make them on proper occasions : and when is the call louder than in the circumstances now mentioned ? " If thou wilt return unto me, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me. And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness †." We are to swear that he *liveth*, in opposition to the gods of the nations, and that he is a God of such perfection as the word ascribes to him ; which implies, in general, that we are, in this solemn manner, to confess his name in all the extent of it, in opposition to every doctrine, institution or practice, that would obscure and falsify it. For,

It would be strange indeed, if men may swear allegiance to their lawful sovereign, when his territories

controversies are agitated, the greater are the difficulties in the way of our duty. They have a manifest tendency to discourage the best in managing their testimony. We are still for looking to *visible probability* of success ; as if that were the *ground* of our hope, that the Lord will arise and establish Zion, or were at least the *rule* of our conduct. When this accordingly is wanting from division, as well as other considerations, how often do our spirits sink under a notion that all endeavours are in vain ? so little have we learned to believe and hope against hope. But have we not, on that very account, the greater need of every mean to excite diligence and resolution, lest we turn off altogether in a fit of sullen dejection. If all such means be not called in, it is an evidence we allow ourselves in sinking discouragements ; for a man that wishes to rise superior to them, will grasp at every thing for his assistance. In *social covenants* the weak hands have been strengthened, and the feeble knees confirmed. It has inspired fainting spirits with courage and zeal, and has often been blessed for bearing down opposition, that appeared almost invincible ; as is evident not only from scripture, but the history of this church in different periods. And if it still be an ordinance for building up church members in the faith, and for struggling successfully with difficulties in the way of reformation, we have the best ground to expect like benefit from it, when essayed in the due order.

* Math. v. 33.

† Jer. iii. 1, 2.

ries are invaded by a foreign enemy, or when his throne is shaken by a formidable rebellion of his own subjects, that church-members may not, on like occasions, swear fealty to their exalted Prince and Saviour. One would think the argument very conclusive from the less to the greater. It must be strange, if an oath for confirmation be an end of all strife, that this may not be interposed in the high concerns of our profession, not when, through the treachery and apostacy of many, church-members are filled with suspicion of one another; or when the contention is so hot, whether *God* be *God*, or *Baal* be *God*; whether *this* be indeed Christ's name, or something that stands directly opposed to it.—What more strange, than that an appeal to God should be *lawful* in every thing of consequence, which is the subject of debate, and that it should be *unlawful* in matters of the greatest importance to the glory of the Redeemer and the edification of his members, when men will bring them into controversy? Might David swear that he would keep all God's righteous judgments †? and shall it be unnecessary or unlawful for us, when we are under the same rule of life, and under as deep obligations to divine love and mercy, have as deceitful and backsliding hearts as he, and walk in the midst of snares no less subtle and dark, than he? or may persons warrantably swear to abide by God's truths and ways, avowed in their confession, in *secret*, but by no means in the *church*; by *themselves apart*, but upon no consideration in *company* with others of the same faith and fellowship? What, I pray, is there in reason, or in all the word of God to make such a difference? are there not many things in the *last* case to make it proper and necessary, which are not to be found in the *first*?

We find Christ himself made confession this way, —open, public confession; for when the high Priest adjured

† Psal; cxix. 106.

him by the living God to tell them, whether he was the Christ, the Son of God,—he was certainly sworn. If he answered directly to that question, it was upon solemn oath ; but “ Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said † :” that is, I am indeed the person you enquire after. This confession, it is true, was not made *jointly* with others ; but as that does not in the least alter the nature of the thing, so no other in heaven or in earth could join with him in it. All competent to them, must have been only a concurring declaration of their faith in his confession,—that he was indeed the Son of God and the true Messias. We need not insist on this mode of confession in the old Testament church. It is well known and was often practised. In the days of *Josiah*, “ They entered into
 “ a covenant to seek the Lord God of their Fathers,
 “ with all their heart and with all their soul, and they
 “ *swore unto the Lord* with a loud voice, and with
 “ shouting, and with trumpets and with cornets.
 “ And all Judah” did what ? mourned over the oath, traduced, questioned or openly denied its obligation, or by ignominious hands committed it to the flames ? No ; such shocking scenes were reserved for other times ; “ all Judah rejoiced at the oath ;
 “ for they had sworn with all their heart and sought
 “ him with their whole desire ; and he was found
 “ of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about ‡.” In the days of *Nehemiah*, “ Every one
 “ having knowledge and understanding clave to their
 “ brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse,
 “ and into an oath, to walk in God’s law, which
 “ was given by Moses the servant of God ; to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord
 “ their God, and his judgments and his statutes §.” And we hold it impossible for the art of Satan himself to shew, why confession by oath was lawful and proper under that dispensation, and is not so *now* ; or to point out any *one* thing which made it necessary *then*,

† Matth. xxvi. 63, 64,
 ‡ N. x. 28, 29.

‡ 2 Chron. xv. 12, 14, 15.

then, which has not equal force *now*.. Or what is the same,—to prove, tho' it was lawful for that church to swear the Lord liveth in a suitableness to that dispensation on proper occasions, that it is unlawful for the church under the new dispensation in similar circumstances. It is easy for men, so disposed, to pour out a flood of talk upon a point they are utterly ignorant of, or never made the subject of their deliberate inquiry, exceedingly wide of the proper question and argument; and it is also easy, to muster up objections without end against any piece of service which their hearts hate; especially if unfashionable in the world and much maligned by it: but an ingenuous mind, free of prejudice, and reconciled to every duty of God's appointment in the proper season of it, under divine conduct, will soon obtain all reasonable satisfaction about this duty.

EIGHTHY, Upon *full conviction*. The Lord calls none to confess him at a *venture*, or upon any other ground than his *own authority*. Whether he propose the question, who hath required these things at your hand? or our fellow men enquire a reason of our faith and hope, with such a declaration of both, we must be in readiness to make answer from the word of inspiration. It is not enough to us, that our fathers, more immediate or remote, made such a confession either as to the matter or manner of it; nor yet that these things have been contended for by persons, who, we are obliged to think, have been both wise and holy. That is a very sufficient reason why we should not cast off their principles without due examination, and perceiving clear scripture evidence against them. Nay, the covenant confession of our *ancestors*, so far as agreeable to the word, extends its obligation to us, whether we approve or reject, as may be demonstrated in the clearest manner at length; but still every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind from the sacred oracles about the several matters of his confession; otherwise presuming to make it, is gross hypocrisy toward

ward God, and the most detestable juggling with men. It must be so, even on the supposition, that our confession is in all points scriptural; because we do not act from judgment and conscience. Tho' the Lord would have us, on fit occasions, in the most public manner, even to *swear* that he liveth,—he means this should be done in truth, in judgment and in righteousness;—pondering the path of our feet, knowing what we do, and having our minds satisfied in all points by his word. We ourselves must appear at his bar, and answer for our profession, as well as our conversation. No man can stand there by proxy; we must therefore see with our own eyes, not with these of any other man.

This is the order of things pointed out by Christ himself,—“The spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness *.” He would have our testimony *for* him, to be the consequence of the Spirit's bearing witness *of* him to us, enlightening our minds, and settling them about every point in our confession. And in our text, confession with the mouth is only to follow upon believing with the heart. To confess one thing and believe another, or be utterly uncertain whether we should believe it or not, is a piece of the most profane villany. Yes; all that engage in this work should be able, in some measure, to say with *Peter*, in his confession †, we *believe* and *are sure* of what we thus confess in the whole extent of our testimony. In this order the first Christians joined in a confession of Christ.—They first received the word gladly; they believed the scripture doctrine concerning him, were fully convinced of its divine original and of their duty to appear for it, and then, in conjunction with the church, they avowed it openly †.

You are not by all this to suppose we mean, that

* John xv. 26, 27.

† John vi. 69.

† Acts ii. 41, 42.

all the confessors must necessarily have the same degrees of knowledge about the several articles of their confession; much less that they must have full assurance of their possessing the faith of God's elect, or be able to dispute for every truth, and answer all the objections that men of perverse minds can start against them, tho' the more skilful in the word of righteousness and the clearer their evidence, so much the better: but we mean, that every man should have his judgment and conscience satisfied, that these are indeed the truths and ordinances of Christ for which he stands forth as a witness; admitting nothing into his confession, which he either disbelieves, or concerning which his mind is not sufficiently instructed and resolved: for whatever advantages we may propose by it, it is not otherwise honest and reasonable, and therefore cannot be an acceptable service. This observation shews, that our confession should be the result of mature deliberation, comparing, according to our best ability, the confession made by the church, in which we propose to join, with the unerring standard; and also, that it should be the fruit of much fervent prayer, that in so important a step the Lord may lead us in the right way, sensible of the great darkness of our mind, and how apt we are to wander even in the plainest path. Without the grace of the covenant no man will stand in the hour of trial; yet only persons of this character can have the least prospect of resisting temptations to apostacy. Those who make confession to please their parents or friends only, out of custom or from the power of education, are like to fly when no man pursueth them. In all things, as our faith, so our confession must stand not in the pleasure and wisdom of men, but in the power and wisdom of God. We only add on this part of the subject

NINTHLY, That our confession should always be justified by a suitable conversation. There is nothing the Spirit of God is more express or frequent in inculcating than this. He insists, if we say we abide in

Christ as revealed in the word, which is the amount of our confession, that we "walk as he also walked*," steering the same course thro' the world, by the same rule, and keeping our eye steadily fixed on him as our perfect pattern:—"That we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," shewing that it has taught us "to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly †;" That we "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work ‡;" as an evidence that we are indeed in Christ, and make confession from a living principle of faith in him.—He puts a severe and lasting *stigma* upon those of another course, "who profess that they know God" and so would have others to believe they are accepted in his sight, "but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate §." Men of this stamp were a grief of heart to holy Paul, and made his eyes a fountain of tears. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ||." While they pretend to be its most zealous, if not its only friends, it is plain they hate it in their hearts, and make open war upon it under a mask of friendship, and so their end must be the heaviest destruction.

Let our confession be, in all respects, as scriptural as can be supposed, without the fruits of righteousness in our walk, it must be as smoke in God's nostrils. By the untender disorderly conduct of many professors, they do what they can to make his glory vile, and expose the confession of the church to the contempt and derision of the world. It is on the matter to maintain, if they have *sound* and *orthodox* heads, the most holy God allows them to retain as *rotten* hearts and conversation as they please; that if they

* 1 John ii. 6.
§ Tit. ii. 16.

† Tit. ii. 10, 12.
|| Phil. iii. 18.

‡ Gal. i. 10.

they be only noisy enough in their confession, they are at full liberty to proclaim Christ the minister of sin, tho' it was his great errand into our world to save his people from it. All the indignities done to him by the infidel part of mankind do not accumulate one half of this guilt, nor shall they sink them so deep in the pit of perdition. At the same time it is easy to see, that they can employ no mean so effectual to defeat every valuable end of their confession; they pull down with the one hand, what they build with the other: nay, they employ both hands to raze to the foundation, what they once set up as a monument of their pretended faith, and thus are convinced and judged of all to be the most heinous transgressors. The greater part of those around them cannot enter into their confession; they neither understand it, nor have they any skill to use the balances of the sanctuary in which it is to be weighed. Their confession may be right or wrong for them. Most probably it is wrong, because it is disliked by the multitude; but they care for none of these things. If they have as much religion as will secure them against the penalty of human laws, let eternity shift for itself. But these very persons are quick enough to see when the lives of church members run against the whole tenor of their confession, and offend perhaps against the plainest dictates of reason. If their creed be above them, their course is manifest and level to their capacity. It were well if the matter went no farther than to call such men *hypocrites*, as most certainly they are, and of no refinement either; but, alas! all the filth scraped together from these naughty confessors, is sure to be cast in the face of Christ himself, his people and work. They invite the world, ready enough of themselves, to speak evil of the good ways of the Lord. Instead of gaining to his interests, they cast the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of enquiring after them. — So much for a short view of that *confession* of Christ, that we are bound to make and maintain.

We now proceed to *state the obligations to such a confession*. It is what we owe to CHRIST, to the church, to the saints that have gone before, to the world, to the rising generation, and to ourselves.

FIRST; It is what we owe to Christ, and that both in point of *obedience and gratitude*.

In point of *obedience*. He has bound it upon us, as an indispensable duty, in sundry texts before quoted. When he commands Sion to confess her God, he enjoins us to do so. When he shews how acceptable a confession of his name before men is, his words contain not only encouragement, but they have the force of a command. When he threatens those who are ashamed of him, and of his truth and ways, he calls upon us in the most explicit and solemn manner to avow him. In all these passages, where we are charged to *contend*, to *strive* together for the faith of the gospel, and the like, an honest *confession* of faith is implied and enjoined; for, besides other things, this is one leading way in which we are to stand forth in its defence. Now, when we call Christ our Lord and Master, we say well, he is so indeed: but then it is necessary in this case that we attend to, and perform the things that he says. Without this, while we own his authority in words, in *fact* we cast off our dependence upon him, our subjection to him, and affirm that we are our own. His will in all things should be our law; even when we cannot satisfy ourselves, why he requires this or the other piece of service. But in the matter before us, there is no room to hesitate; because such a confession is necessary to distinguish and separate his interest from every thing opposite to it. When he calls us to confession, it is no more than a call to take part with him openly, in opposition to the god of this world, under whatever form he appears to the hurt of his work and glory. And shall any of us have the presumption to decline such a token of our allegiance and subjection? Are we his friends at heart, and will we insist on not being distinguished

tinguished from his enemies by an open scriptural confession, but contend for being visibly ranked with them. In his judgment, which is always according to truth, he that gathereth not with him, let his excuse be what it may, scattereth abroad *.

It is what we owe him in point of *gratitude*. Great favours always infer great obligations upon those to whom they are done; and not to acknowledge is to deny them. And have not Christ's gracious thoughts and doings to his people gone far above all thoughts? Who will pretend to reach their height or to reckon them in order? Did he not undertake their cause, when, in the hand of the whole creation, it was utterly desperate? Did he not empty himself and take on him the form of a servant for their sake? Did he not stoop to the load of all their guilt, and answer for it at the bar of absolute purity and justice? Has he not justified them, and so freed them from condemnation and restored them to divine favour; in some measure sanctified them, and settled all the privileges of sonship, even to the inheritance of everlasting glory, upon them? Do they not, in a word, owe all they are, all they have, and all they hoped for, as Christians, to him as their once suffering and now glorified head? And can they deny him any request? Has he *saved* them? And shall not his glory and interests be *dear* to them? Has he made them *heirs* of God, and *joint heirs* with HIMSELF at the expence of stooping as low as *hell*? And can they for shame decline to confess him in the most humiliating circumstances? Rather should they not testify as Paul, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my confession with joy. I am ready not only to be *bound*, but to *die*, at any time, and in any way, that infinite wisdom sees best for the name of the Lord Jesus. Such a confession in all the duties of it, in any possible condition of hardship and danger, is but a poor return of his infinite love and its fruits.

SECONDLY,

* Matth. xii. 30.

SECONDLY, To the *Church*. By her very constitution, the church is a *witnessing* society. She is the pillar and ground of truth. Not merely a pillar on which the Lord would have it preserved, but notified to all around. Hence her character drawn by her great head himself, "Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord *." And agreeably to this, his testimony and law is placed in her †. In the management of that testimony, she is in a state of war; and hence she is represented as an "army with banners," not furled, but *displayed*, as being continually in action. She is engaged in a testimony, which Satan and his emissaries are employing either their craft or violence, to silence and make void; and so is engaged in a warfare for Christ against the serpent and his seed. Their attacks have often varied, according to the circumstances which gave them the fairest probability of success; but the artillery in one form or another, has still been kept playing upon her from age to age; in none more than the present, when the gates of hell seem to have outdone themselves; as if all former disappointments had only inspired them with greater courage; and suggested more artful methods of address.

In this case, ought not all who wish well to her cause to take her by the hand, in a *joint confession* of her Lord? our assistance may be small; but what is in our power should not be wanting. Are we members of a *witnessing* society? and shall we refuse to emit our testimony together with our brethren, in all ways that are competent and lawful? Are we *soldiers*? and will we remonstrate against arming, or fly from the standard, when the enemy pours in thick and fast, as if this were the day of decision? How then do we betray both Christ and Zion? She is the city of our God; and what genuine inhabitant will decline to mount the wall or stand in the breach, when she is so furiously assaulted? She is the vessel in which all the Redeemer's interests among men are embarked

* Isa. xliii. 10.

† Psal. lxxviii. 5. Rev. xii. 17.

ed ; and what shipman does not run to his quarters in a storm or in an engagement ? She is the spouse of Christ ; and certainly all his friends should boldly avow her cause, when so roughly handled by her adversaries.—Nay, she is the mother of all who believe ; and are these her dutiful sons, who will not know her in her oppression or sorrow ? By our faithful confession, we come in for her support and encouragement ; intimating that her towers and bulwarks shall not be levelled, if we can help it ; that she shall not sink, if we can do any thing to preserve her alive ; neither shall she be ill used, if we can prevent it ; and if suffering be her lot, that we are willing to go sharers in her calamity. But on the contrary, to reject her confession, is plainly to declare it a matter of indifference to us, though in all things she be plowed as a field, and her enemies accomplish every purpose of desolation. How unlike the conduct of the captives in *Babylon*, who preferred her welfare to their chief personal joy, and looked upon themselves as wasted in her spoil* ? or to *Paul*, who was ready to be offered upon the sacrifice and service of her faith ; nor would give place by subjection, so much as an hour, that the truth of the gospel might still continue in her† ? How offensive it is to her glorious head, we learn from the *we* pronounced on them that are *at ease* in *Zion* ; and from the direction of the angel, “Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not out to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty‡.”

THIRDLY, To the *faithful in former ages*. They took up their confession of Christ, as he framed it to their hand, and adhered to it at all possible expence : all the weight of the cross could not frighten them from their duty, nor yet force them to any compromise with the world. They were willing to be accounted

* Psal. cxxxvii. 6. † Phil. ii. 17. Gal. ii. 5. ‡ Amos vi. 1. Judg. v. 23.

counted the filth of the world; they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; they submitted to be afflicted and tormented: Nay, they loved not their lives to the death, but cheerfully parted with them in the most *horrid* forms of cruelty, that infernal rage could devise. Why? verily, that the standard of Christ might be maintained in the world, and his name transmittetted entire to us. To them, as instruments in the hand of God, do we owe the gospel in its purity, and all its privileges. Marked as these are with their *blood*, should not their memory be precious and dear to us? It is embalmed in heaven, and should be savoury to us on the earth. But how is this to be testified? How indeed, but by receiving their confession and abetting the same cause? Without this, we consent to have their memorial blotted out from under heaven. We justify all the reproach and cruelty they met with, and serve ourselves heirs to all the guilt of their innocent and most precious blood. For we arraign both their *confession* and their *death* of folly;—declaring, had we been so happy as to have lived in those days, we would have supported the dragon in his war against them; all this, tho' they had the best reason to expect we would not be insensible of our obligations, but would shew kindness to them for the sake of their Lord and their cause. But, on the other hand, by taking their confession and testimony upon ourselves, we enter the most *solemn* and *express protestation* against all the injuries done to their persons and work; and so condemn the world for their hatred and cruelty. We so approve ourselves their genuine successors, that they see themselves live in us; and thus they still continue to speak on earth, while they are glorified in heaven. “The beast shall make war against them, says John speaking of the witnesses, and shall overcome them, and kill them; but after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet †.” Their bodies shall

shall rest in their graves, as those of other saints till the last trumpet shall sound; but they rise again, and live in those who come after, in the same Spirit, adopting the same confession and honourable cause, for which they suffered the loss of all things.

FOURTHLY, *To the world.* In this respect, as in other things, we are debtors both to the *Jew* and the *Greek*, to the *wise* and *unwise*; to *friends* and *enemies*. They have an undoubted right to all in our power for information about Christ, his truth and cause. In withholding any mean, suited to such an end, we do injustice to their souls, and, in effect, bring the blood of them that perish upon our own head: But by a scriptural confession of Christ, as well as by a holy life, or more direct teaching, as the Lord gives ability and opportunity, we contribute to their salvation. It is our testimony, how precious the Redeemer is, how pleasant and honourable his service, how invaluable his truths and ways are. It is one of the most express and solemn invitations, we can possibly give them, to fellowship with us in him. Hereby, according to the best of our judgment, we shew them where Christ makes his flock to rest at noon, urge them to come out of Satan's camp to our Lord's standard, call them as so many strays in the wilderness into his fold; and so to a public acknowledgment of his reign and government. They have, it is true, all these things set before them in the written word in the plainest manner, nor are we to propose the substitution of our *confession*, in whole or in part, in the room of that *divine* and *unerring rule*, or attempt in the least to infringe its authority and detract from its perfection and use. Far be such a design. But our confession is calculated to awaken their attention to the things of Christ and eternity, influence them to enquire after these interesting concerns, as described in the word, and may be a help to the better understanding of them. It is one way, in which, agreeable to our Lord's direction, our candle is put in a candlestick that they which come in may see the

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light. Whereas without this, the knowledge we have attained of Christ and his ways, in so far as their edification is concerned, is in a great measure put under a bushel, so that none can have benefit by it. *David*, we have seen, would speak of God's testimonies even before kings; and why? not only because such an avowal of God as his *portion*, and of his *testimonies* as the *men of his counsel*, was duty in itself, and made much for the divine glory; but that those with whom he was conversant might see their excellency, and be gained to their side.

Sometimes the Lord has made the confession of his people remarkably useful to the world, as appears from the history of the church in all ages; particularly in our own country. It has made such impression upon their mind and heart, that numbers have not only abated their persecuting violence, but, being freed from their prejudices, have yielded themselves to the Lord, and entered into the sanctuary with those, against whom their spirits were most keenly edged. Is not this the meaning of that celebrated maxim, illustrated and confirmed in all generations, *the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church*? Their faithful confession, sealed with their blood, has been a mean in the hand of God of providing the church in greater accessions of members, and so a mean of raising up a greater cloud of witnesses for the interests of her glorious Head. The connexion in a passage before quoted seems much to this purpose: "And thou shalt swear the Lord liveth.—And the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory†;"—Denoting the influence that the open and solemn confession of the church, through his blessing, should have upon strangers:—that it should often be a mean of informing and disengaging their minds, and accordingly, of reconciling them to Christ and his cause. To multitudes, no doubt, the confession of Christians has

† Jer. iv. 2.

has been, and still will be, utterly lost, even as the gospel itself; but even when it has no other fruit than to excite the hatred and contempt of the world, we have the consolation of having done our duty, and they are rendered more inexcusable. If our confession be not a mean of leading them to Christ, it will be a fearful evidence against them in the day of his coming.

FIFTHLY, To the *rising generation*. What use many of them may make of it is, another thing; but they have a right to expect, that the cause and testimony of Jesus will be conveyed down to *them* as pure and entire, as *we* received it from *our* fathers, together with all the improvements in reformation that the Lord has, or may afterwards honour us with. They have a title to this, not only in common with the *world at large*, but as the seed of the church, immediately under her care and inspection. It is their *birth-right*; what they have as good a claim to, as children can have to that portion of their father's goods, which legally falls to their share. Hence the direction, "walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell to the generation following*." And elsewhere, "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children†." The Lord does not merely *allow* the present generation to act so kind a part to that which followes, but lays it upon them as a *peremptory charge*, for the neglect of which they must answer.

But how is this charge to be kept? very much by a faithful appearance for that testimony and law, or such a *confession* of all divine truths and ordinances,

* Psal. xlviii. 12, 13.

† Psal. lxxviii. 5, 6.

as we have endeavoured to describe to you. It is thus, that, according to the measure of light and grace bestowed, we separate the chaff from the wheat, the precious from the vile,—the truths of God from prevailing errors, and his ordinances from the inventions of men, and so present them to posterity. It is thus we go round about Zion, as men go round the inheritance transmitted to them by their fathers, and tell the rising race, what are her towers, bulwarks and palaces, which, by the authority of God, they are bound to defend even unto blood; and what are the works of Satan, that have been raised against them, upon which they are to turn all their zeal. Nay; it is by such *confession*, as a distinguished mean, that these things are *preserved* for the enjoyment and use of posterity. Were it not for such confession the testimony of Jesus, as it lies in the word, would in a great measure be eclipsed in the world. Even while the sacred oracles are preserved entire and uncorrupted, the rising generation, without some extraordinary interposition, might be deprived of almost all the precious doctrines contained in them, and have no more of the Bible than the *sound* without the *sense*, the *letters* and *syllables*, without the marrow and *substance* of revelation; because numbers, who profess to receive the scriptures for the word of God, so cut and carve upon it, so twist and hammer it to please their fancies; that scarcely any one doctrine of Christianity has escaped their sacrilegious hands. So that let the church once drop her *confession*, and she does much, not only to hinder posterity from knowing what is really the cause of Christ, but to deprive them of it altogether: for this is the great ordinary mean of transmitting it from age to age. A striking instance of this we have in the church of *Rome*, even in those places, where her members have the familiar use of the scriptures in their own language. Instead of the precious truths of CHRIST, there is scarcely any thing

thing left but *cunningly devised fables*, or what is worse, the *doctrine of devils*, either for the present generation or posterity. And let every man ask his own heart, how cruel it is to debar the rising race from so invaluable a treasure? It would be a sin less heinous in itself for men to embrue their hands in the blood of their own children, than do any thing to interrupt the conveyance of the truths and cause of Christ; or to look on with indifference, while others dare to commit violence upon them; because in the *one* case, they take away their *natural life* only, whereas in the *other*, they stand charged with the guilt of attempting to *murder their immortal souls*.

SIXTHLY, To *ourselves*: for with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. It is certainly our duty to be in the use of all appointed means for obtaining the knowledge of our union to the person of Christ, and interest in his covenant; and that this be made still more evident. Much of our comfort in this world lies in having and preserving some clear evidence of being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Now, a *scriptural confession* of Christ, accompanied with tenderness and fruitfulness of conversation, is a proof of that glorious translation; for no man can after *this manner* call *Jesus LORD*, but by the holy Ghost. But on the other hand; when persons decline an honest confession of Christ, according to the degree of their light, they want one great evidence of their saintship, and such as may make them justly suspect all the rest which they continue to hang by. How cruel are we to *ourselves*, in contributing any thing to our walking in darkness about so important a point?

Besides; is not *growth* in holiness a great privilege? Unquestionably every believer esteems it such. The more like he is to his God, the greater excellence does he attain, the more fit is he for communion with God on earth, and the more meet to enjoy him in heaven. But, in standing off from a due confession of Christ, persons deny themselves an in-

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stituted mean of being built up in faith and holiness ; as much in its place, as if they were to refuse the evening and morning sacrifice, in secret and in their families, or were to neglect opportunities of shewing the Lord's death at a communion table. It cuts off one conduit, as it were, from the spiritual life, and such as has often been filled with very abundant grace to the saints. To which we may add, it is so provoking to a holy God, that in righteous displeasure he may blast, for a season, the other means of grace and salvation which they attend. He will not be trifled with, even by his most honoured friends. He has it in his power to correct his children with very sharp rods, tho' he will not cast them out of his family ; and it is no wonder he restrain the influences of his grace when they obstinately deny him any part of that homage and service which is his due. The *Jews* of old would not build the Lord's house, urging it as a reason, tho' indeed it was no more than a pretext to their carelessness and sloth, that the time was not come for so weighty an undertaking ; and therefore he visited them with drought and famine. The heavens over them were stayed from dew, and of course the earth was stayed from her fruit. " They looked for much, and lo " it came to little ; and when they brought it home " he did blow upon it *." The same measure did he appoint them in the days of *Malachi*, when they robbed him in tithes and in offerings †. In like manner may he resent lack of service in the matter before us toward his dearest children. We believe it will be found in fact, that persons who resist the loudest calls of word and providence to make confession of Christ, so far as they have been enlightened, and indulge themselves in scruples against it,—have either no more than a *name to live* in the church, or are miserably *dry* and backsliden in their exercise. Grey hairs are here and there upon them, convincing symptoms of a

* Hag. i. 2,--11. † Mal. iii. 8,--11.

spiritual consumption, though they may not know it. Nay, it is much if they be not similar to the bones in the valley of vision,—scattered abroad, and *very dry* †: While the Christian who sows to the Spirit beside all waters, is made to flourish as the palm-tree and grow like the cedar in Lebanon; for the way of the Lord has ever been, and ever will be strength to the upright. In public confession, particularly, even in our own land, has he sent a plenteous rain that refreshed and confirmed his weary heritage. The people of God in general have attained the excellency of Carmel and Sharon.

This subject might be suitably *improved* at great length, and in much variety; but we must not encroach on the time devoted to other exercises. It shews

First, The true nature of confession. It is not the forming of a *party*, or the connecting ourselves with a party already formed, in which we may find vent for a spirit of faction and pride; but a public avowal of Christ and his cause, according to the best judgment we have been enabled to form of them. We do associate with our brethren, and are obliged by our confession to walk with them in the whole fellowship of the gospel; but we do not put ourselves into the power of any man or party. We only declare our subjection to the authority of Christ in an open adherence to his most precious interests. We do not make *factions*, but follow the line marked out for us in the word of God, for the preservation of the Redeemer's name. And if our connections fall off from Christ and the truth, instead of being chained to their persons or opinions, we are at full liberty, nay, it is our indispensable duty, not only to desert them, but even to turn our confession against all their unscriptural principles and practices. Where the carcass is, thither will the eagles be gathered together; where the cause of Christ is, there ought we to be

be found, tho' all our former friends should become our enemies for the truth's sake.

Secondly, That making confession of Christ is far from being a matter of *indifferency*. It is not an act of courtesy, but in many respects a just and necessary service. In our times many will be Christians *at large*: Yes, that they will. Any particular distinguishing confession of Christ, they hold to be at best a work of supererogation, the neglect of which can be no sin, if it be not a display of superlative wisdom. Be it so; but then we may spit in the face of our divine Lord, or aver that the scriptures are not his word, but some cunningly devised fable; the church of God is nothing in the world; nor have posterity any claims upon us. Public confession of Christ is no doubt liable to much abuse; and to the very worst purposes it has been abused accordingly: never more, than when it has been made, in whole or in part, the ground of confidence and hope before God. But are not the very best things open to abuse? Does this in the least depreciate such confession, in its own proper nature and use? Men will please themselves; they must needs be both higher than God, and wiser than he: but these words, methinks, should sound an alarm in every conscience not seared as with a hot iron. “Whosoever shall
“be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous
“and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of
“man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of
“his Father with the holy angels *.” Pretensions to Christianity *at large* are, for the most part, no other than a public *renunciation* of the Christian name, and a bold claim to live without God, and without hope in the world. Such pretenders, generally speaking, are in fact no better than *infidels* in opinion, and worse than many infidels in practice.

Thirdly, That to *trifle* with a confession of Christ is the most wanton and perilous folly. With what high concerns, with what sacred obligations do ma-
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ny sport themselves! They have not wanted advice by their godly friends, nor by their public teachers relative to their duty on this head; nay, they have not wanted convictions, that a public confession of Christ with *every possible* solemnity is expressly enjoined in the word. In spite of all attempts to stifle these convictions, they have been kept alive, and haunted them from morning to night of a long time. Perhaps they have been carried by the force of conviction to resolve on embracing the first opportunity presented in providence; yet to this day they have not put hand to God's plough in this exercise. Instead of offering themselves in *social covenanting*, they have not renewed their baptismal covenant at the Lord's table. Why? not because they have few means of information; for these are at hand in abundance:—not because they are at a loss to determine what denomination of Christians to connect themselves with; they have been clear about this for some years; at least entertain no doubts of their ability to bring this point to a very satisfactory issue:—not from darkness about their state before God; they hope this is comfortably settled. On what account then do they stand off? Truly they are not certain. They make some apology to those who question them; while their own consciences testify to their face, that these things have no weight with them. Whether it be they do not chuse to be gazed at, or that some of their acquaintance would flout at them, or that they are not in some respects fixed for life, or that they cannot think of putting themselves to any trouble in these matters,—it is perhaps impossible for them to say. These or the like considerations they must confess are at the bottom of keeping their distance. May we not then ask, if this be not the most egregious *trifling* imaginable? Will you suffer the stare or laughter of fools to make continual havoc in your consciences? Is your condition in life like to be more comfortable, because you violently burst God's bands, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke? Believe it,

God will not be mocked. He is in good earnest when he calls you to duty, and will be so, when you are brought into judgment. Christ's name shall be had in remembrance to all generations, tho' you refuse to honour it,—tho' you did all in your power to insult and bury it; yet such folly shall be called over another day. Continue thus without remorse, and without improving the blood of the covenant for pardon,—and the consequence is no secret. “Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as the whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you*.”

Fourthly, That it is of some importance *what* our confession be. Not at all, say multitudes. “Let a person be only a *good man*, and he need not regard his profession, whether it be this or that, or neither the one nor the other, but something different from both. In the day of judgment, no enquiries will be made after a confession.” But this sentiment is certainly not digested. Is it then of no consequence, whether our confession be regulated in all things by the word of God, or take its measure in many things from the false opinions and prevailing prejudices of men;—whether it reach to the intire system of divine truth, or reprobate, at least overlook many precious articles;—whether it be suited to the dispensations passing over the church, or not;—calculated to gain its important ends, or framed as if on purpose to defeat them? One would think there must be an essential and everlasting difference between *right* and *wrong* in a *confession* of Christ as in other things; and that, if a scriptural confession be for his glory, an unscriptural one must be injurious to it. An unscriptural confession is certainly worse than none, by so much as a *false* representation of the Redeemer's name is worse than *silence*. Paul was

* Prov. i. 25, 26, 27.

is of a very different opinion, when he recommends holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, and that we hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus †. Nay, he is clear, if any teach, and accordingly confess, otherwise than the scriptures do, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, --that from such we ought to withdraw ourselves ‡ in our confession and communion. Good men may be guilty of many bad things; but that any man truly good, acting in character, and under the guidance of the divine Spirit, will regard a *confession* of Christ in the absurd and unscriptural light in which some would represent it, we shall not easily believe. It involves such a contradiction, that whatever be said of corruption, grace must be incapable of it. What particular questions will be put in the great day of decision, it is not for us to know. This the day itself must declare; but it seems plain, that a thorough scrutiny will be made into the conduct of every man; and accordingly what part he acted for the declarative glory of God upon earth; what account he made of Christ's name, and how he carried toward it in all things. If a *confession* of Christ be *necessary*, and if the word of God be the *rule* of our *confession* as of our conversation,—how or why, our confession should not pass under review, we shall leave to your consideration.

Fifthly, The sin of *apostacy* from a scriptural confession. In some respect, better not vow an adherence to Christ and his interests, than vow and not pay. To cast God's cords behind our back, after having willingly, and with our own hands fastened them, is in the most audacious manner to set the Almighty at defiance. Whether confession be made in the form of a vow and oath, or not, in the nature of the thing, it is always implied; and after this to turn away, is to add villainous *perfidy* to all the other

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† 1 Tim. iii. 9. 2 Tim. i. 13.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 2, 5.

aggravations of our offence. Shall such treacherous dealing prosper? No verily; the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways*. His own wickedness shall correct him, and his backslidings shall reprove him: he shall know and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that he has forsaken the Lord his God†. It is possible such an one may acquire a little credit with the world; tho' often that very altar, where many have offered their faith and conscience, has abhorred them. He may receive applause from men that are equally enemies to the truth, and of the same perfidious way with himself; tho' when most regaled with this incense, his very associates despise him in their heart: for it is no uncommon thing for men to hate and despise that in another, which they approve in themselves. He may provide a little better for his worldly interests; tho' neither in this respect is apostacy always successful. But alas! when the gain is greatest, it is still a miserable bargain. You have the praise of men, and rush upon divine displeasure. You accumulate the wages of unrighteousness, and if the secret blasting curse of providence do not blow upon it, as it has often done, yet you treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Even in this world has apostacy erected fearful monuments of divine vengeance. As really as ever a criminal fell a sacrifice to the laws of his country on the ignominious tree, as really, and in different ways, has a holy God hung up perfidious backsliders, a hideous spectacle to the world and the churches. When persons are dear to the Lord, apostacy shall not go unpunished. He will not cast them out of his covenant and family; but he has rods of various kinds and of different sizes to chastise their folly; and sooner or later shall some of the sharpest of these be applied. Peter paid dear for his apostacy, and so did Solomon. It is the same sin still, and cannot fail of similar correction.

Sixthly,

Sixthly, A *warrant* for the solemn work, in which a considerable number are this day to be employed. What a strange noise does covenanting often make through a whole country side! Almost all the inhabitants are in a ferment, as if a band of rovers, who turn the world upside down, were come among them. What head is not filled with speculation? and what tongue does not ring with the singularity of it, with the folly or the sin of it? One maintains, you may as well affirm, that the Son of God has not come in the flesh, and put an end to the beggarly elements of this world as engage in such exercise. Another, that it is the very worst branch of *Popery*; at least, says a third, it is an act of superstition and will-worship; and one great mischief of it, returns a fourth, is, that it raises a wall of partition, and a very extraordinary one, between Christians. O the times! A duty so clearly enjoined in the unalterable rule of righteousness, and so often practised by the saints with special marks of divine approbation! That very work, which was once reckoned no small part of the glory of *Scotland*, through all the reformed churches,—accompanied with an abundant, even an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost,—followed with most glorious times of reformation, and in which multitudes of all ranks thought it their honour to be employed! What is there here, my brethren, to excite so much admiration, to open the sluices for such a torrent of reproach, and engage you in coining so many hard names?—no more than avouching the Lord to be our God, expressing our resolution thro' grace to walk in his ways, according to the revelation made of him in his own word, by solemn oath;—that is, such a confession of Christ as we have endeavoured to describe to you. And we appeal to every serious unprejudiced mind, whether this work merits such censure at the hand of any. We believe, that many speak evil of it, because they have not considered it. They see it is uncommon. They hear persons whom they esteem for their knowledge, their reli-

religion and tenderness, much prejudiced against it. They enter into their sentiments and use their language, they know not upon what grounds. We beg you will be at some pains for your better information; and we are persuaded, if your inquiries are well directed, and persisted in with a mind open to conviction, you will form a very different judgment of the work of this day from what you have been accustomed to. But if men are resolved to give themselves no trouble to enquire into the nature of this duty, shame should oblige them to be silent, and not speak evil of what they must confess themselves ignorant of. And if any are determined to consider it only in the light of sophistry and misrepresentation, yielding themselves a prey to them whose inclination and interest it is to deceive, they must take their course. We shall not in the least, it is hoped, be moved by their rage and reviling. Let God be true in requiring such a confession of Christ, though those who oppose and reproach should be found false witnesses against him and his work. Let them please themselves and censure us as freely as possible; we hope to be acquitted at an higher bar. A gracious God will not condemn us in what he allows and requires. His people have been led to it with special marks of his approbation both in former and in latter times; and why should we not expect great things to day for his own name's sake?

A short exhortation to those who are now to make a very solemn confession of Christ shall conclude this discourse.

WE are persuaded of you, my brethren, that you are come this length in consequence of your consciences being impressed with the authority of God in-joining it, and as the fruit of much prayer; for this is the appointed order.—Be concerned for a *believing heart* in this exercise; knowing that without faith it is impossible to please God. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Without this, the main thing in your service is a wanting; and your confession will be an abomination

domination in God's fight. Your hearts must be lifted up with your hands to God in the heavens. Your confession should be an outward expression of what passes there. Let your whole soul close with the person of Christ, and with a three one God in him. Receive him in the whole extent of his mediatory character, particularly as the Lord your righteousness, by whom alone we can be emboldened in any approach unto God. Is not faith his gift? Is he not the author and finisher of it? Is it not his gracious promise laid before you as the ground of expectation, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*." His Spirit can subdue the most unbelieving, and open the most closed heart.

Take heed that your eye be *single*; that your confession be not in any respect to be seen of men,—to support a character, to please a natural conscience, or any thing of a like kind. With a heart circumcised to love precious Christ, and with a steady eye to his glory as your great and chief end, are you to stand up and confess him before this assembly. An aim lower than the glory of your Redeemer will be like the fly in the ointment, which will make it send forth a stinking favour. If the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light; but when the eye is evil, the whole body is full of darkness†. The Lord searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men. Your principles and views cannot be hid from him: and at the same time he alone can rectify what is wrong in either of these. Beg that his love may be shed forth abundantly in your heart at this time by the Holy Ghost; that will kindle a flame of divine affection in your breast toward him. Insist that he would clear, direct and fix your eye. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart‡," is his own engagement; and so is the encouraging

* Isa. xlv. 24. † Matth. vi. 22, 23. ‡ Deut xxx. 6.

couraging declaration elsewhere, in which grace is held out, both to direct your aim, and establish your confidence in his service; "At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel *." Thus

Let the dedication of yourselves to the Lord, and your confession of his name, be, in the strictest sense, a *free-will* offering; accounting it your privilege to be called to so honourable and pleasant work. Christ is infinitely worthy of you, and of all that you are and have. He loveth a chearful giver; nor shall any other be accepted. Such is the natural aversion of the heart to God and duty, that often it never discovers more reluctance than when on the very point of service; while Satan makes it his business to cast all obstructions in the way: but a new breathing of the Spirit will subdue every thing of this kind, and make the whole soul like the chariots of Amminadab. The promise may be as much trusted to and urged, in your social and public, as in your secret and personal dedication, "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

Beware of *resting* in this appearance and confession. Do not imagine that it will excuse you in any degree for an unholy life. It will, on the contrary, add to your obligations to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Neither are you to suppose, it will make any part of your righteousness for pardon, acceptance and eternal life, now, or in the future judgment. Allow not the most distant thought of this once to enter your heart. None can be to you in Christ's stead; nor must any duty whatever come in for a share in his glorious surety righteousness. In his cross alone may we glory. It is only in the faith of forgiveness, and of our right to the heavenly inheritance thro' him, that you can acceptably confess him; and where this is, there will also be an utter renunciation of all confidence in the flesh. A confession

* Isa. xvii. 7.

feſſion is good and indiſpenſibly neceſſary in its place; but curſed is that man who makes it, or any thing done by him his Saviour. This is to walk in the light of his own fire and ſparks that he hath kindled, and all he has to expect at the hand of a righteous God is to ly down in ſorrow †. Let the repreſentation our Lord makes of this caſe, repreſs every working of the legal and proud heart. “Many will ſay “to me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in “thy name, and in thy name have caſt out devils, “and in thy name done many wonderful works? “And then will I profeſs to them, I never knew you. “Depart from me ye workers of iniquity ‡.” In one word

Let me remind you, that you are to lay your account with all ſorts of *hardſhips* in abiding by your confeſſion, and proſecuting the ends of it. A ſtrong party in your own boſoms will give you continual diſturbance. Satan and his agents will encompass you on every hand. Whatever they have done in order to weary out the ſaints of the Moſt High in time paſt, that you have no ſecurity againſt: but perſecution of one kind or another will be your lot. It as much attends a godly man in this evil world, as the ſhadow does the body. We hope you have therefore counted the coſt. Looking away from yourſelves, your dependance is upon the grace of the new covenant lodged in Chriſt your head. Without this you can do nothing. You will neither vow acceptably upon this occaſion, nor make conſcience of performing what you have vowed. You will not make an approved confeſſion, nor will your after walk juſtify your confeſſion. But by this grace ſtrengthening, you can do all things. There is no duty of any kind, in any circumſtances, but it will help you to perform. There is no burden of whatever weight or ſize but it will enable you to bear.

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Diffident then, very diffident of yourselves, utterly
distrusting yourselves, and with your eye steadily,
and in much assurance fixed on this grace, say, I
will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make
mention of thy righteousness even of thine only.

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